

Medical News

ORLANDO

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October 2010 >> \$5

Physician Spotlight

Randy Schwartzberg, MD

Orlando Orthopaedic Center

By JEFF WEBB

If you're looking for orthopaedic surgeon Randy Schwartzberg on a weekend in the fall, it might help to be a football fan.

On a Friday night you almost certainly will find him on the sidelines at one of the 13 high school football stadiums where he and his team of sports medicine specialists offer their expertise to the players.

On a Saturday, you'll find him glued to the television watching his beloved University of Michigan Wolverines carry on their storied tradition of being the winningest team in college football history.

And on another autumn day, you might spy Schwartzberg at the Citrus Bowl tending to the professionals of the Tuskers, Florida's United Football League team based in Orlando.

But even if you don't know a touchdown from a touchback, don't worry; you still can see Schwartzberg at the Orlando Orthopaedic Center, where he and a full roster of other physicians operate one of Central Florida's most comprehensive orthopaedic practices.

Schwartzberg is one of the marquee attractions at the center, which has five locations.

Born in Detroit as the oldest of three children, Schwartzberg's family moved to Hollywood, Fla., when he was 10 years old. His dad was a dentist (now retired) and his mother was a teacher but now is a travel agent.

Growing up in south Florida, Schwartzberg was an athlete, playing baseball, football and wrestling at Hollywood High. In those days, "we really didn't have (physicians)" that helped teams and players, the 45-year-old said. "That may have stimulated some of my interest in what I do nowadays to help kids and schools."

Even back then, Schwartzberg knew he wanted to be a doctor. The interest



"must have been instilled by my parents. Otherwise, how does a teenage kid know he wants to be a doctor? But I didn't know anything about orthopaedics or sports medicine" at the time, he said.

But this much he did know: He had to head north to earn his undergraduate degree at the University of Michigan. Both his parents went there, and later his younger sisters did, too. "It's a family thing," he said. "I bleed maize and blue," he said.

Schwartzberg graduated in 1987 with a degree in psychology and returned to Florida, where he enrolled in medical school at the University of Florida. After receiving his MD in 1991, he left Gainesville and drove a little farther south to undertake his internship and residency at Orlando Regional Healthcare System (known now as Orlando Health).

"They have had an orthopaedic surgery residency for many years, and it is a good one, well-thought of nationally," he said.

After a one-year fellowship at the American Sports Medicine Institute in Birmingham, Ala., Schwartzberg returned to Orlando. And, perhaps not surprisingly,

is sharing his knowledge and experience as director of Sports Medicine Education for Orlando Health's Orthopaedic Surgery Residency. In that capacity, he has trained more than 20 third-year residents in their 3-month sports medicine rotation to evaluate patients and become orthopaedic surgeons. He also oversees two sports medicine conferences per month "where we give talks or engage in interactive case conferences. ... I have a passion for teaching," said Schwartzberg, who also is a member of the clinical faculty at University of Central Florida College of Medicine.

Schwartzberg and his colleagues at Orlando Orthopaedic Center enlist the help of the residents to help them support the bevy of sports teams for which they provide team physician coverage.

"Our group takes care of the physicals for 13 high schools. We do all the pre-participation physicals. We bring a small army to each school. We've developed a sports medicine program, we have an outreach coordinator and we have athletic trainers," he said. "And we have an open-door policy for any of the kids that need to be seen in the office."

Schwartzberg routinely gives presentations to physicians and other healthcare professionals, as well as "performing cutting-edge sports medicine research and publishing the material nationally," he said.

"I have at least six or seven research projects currently," he said, including "two multi-center ACL reconstruction studies, a postoperative rotator cuff pain catheter study, two shoulder MRI accuracy studies and an ACL bone tunnel-widening study."

Schwartzberg also is spearheading a study that seeks to measure the efficacy of the anti-inflammatory drug Toradol, which is routinely injected into professional football players.

"Players line up before games for their

Toradol shots. It has some type of magical property in their minds," Schwartzberg explained. The United Football League's policy last year was not to give the shots on a routine basis because it is "bad medicine" to do so without a reason. "I support that" approach, he said. "But the players love it. ... It's gotten to the point where doctors don't *want* to do it, but they feel like they *have* to."

So, Schwartzberg obtained approval to conduct a randomized study of Tuskers players who agree to receive either a Toradol or placebo injection before their games. "We'll document their histories, injuries, how much time they play, how many snaps they take, et cetera. After the game they will fill-out another visual analog score and answer questions about how it affected their game," he explained.

"We started last month (September) and will continue through November," with an eye toward presenting the results at a national meeting in about a year, Schwartzberg said.

Despite his demanding schedule, Schwartzberg said he makes family his priority. He and his wife of 7 years, Stephanie, have two sons, Brady, 4, and Brock, 2.

Stephanie "works part-time as a recovery room nurse, and spends a lot of time with the kids and running the house," he said. As is the case with most busy professionals who have young children, their leisure time is usually limited to an occasional date for dinner or a movie, Schwartzberg said. "But the thing we do most is look after our kids."

And don't forget University of Michigan football.

"My wife is a sports fan by marriage," he said. "But on game day she knows if she doesn't root for Michigan she'll be outnumbered. One of her kids is already a fan and the other will be. ... The tradition continues."